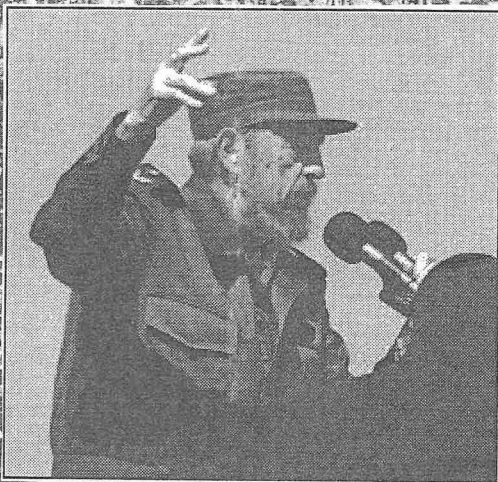


SPECIAL
SUPPLEMENT

Gramma
INTERNATIONAL

FIDEL ON MAY DAY

- The capitalist system... is totally inconceivable and irreconcilable with an honest, sincere, objective notion of human rights
- Who could have imagined that one day young Latin Americans would be sent as cannon fodder to that unjust and genocidal war!
- The number of Cuban doctors, dentists, and health technicians lending their services to other nations totals no less than 17,000



More than one million Havanans came together for the May Day event in José Martí Plaza de la Revolución.

Guantánamo: "One of the most grotesque cases of human rights violations"

Fidel Castro's May Day Speech, May 1, 2004

Text and format transcribed from the English-language edition of the Cuban journal *Granma Internacional* (original tabloid on file – CAPS SUBHEADS IN ORIGINAL – Ed.)

COVER: Guantanamo: “One of the most grotesque cases of human rights violations”

**This country will defend itself with its laws
and if necessary it will defend itself with weapons**

It seems that this crowd has broken all records (Applause and shouts)

Dearest guests, dear comrades:

This is the 45th time we have celebrated a glorious Labor Day since the triumph of the Revolution.

Extremely important things are taking place both inside and outside our country.

The Revolution is following its triumphal course with more strength and success than ever. We have had proof of this recently: the Geneva meetings on April 15 and 22 will go down in the history of revolutionary diplomacy. They mark the moment when a crushing blow was dealt to the enormous hypocrisy, permanent falsehood and cynicism the masters of the world use to try to preserve the rotten system of political and economic domination they have imposed on the world.

Our country had been placed in the dock yet again. The new US administration and the states in the European Union made the mistake of forgetting that at the extreme eastern end of Cuba one of the most horrendous examples of human rights violations ever to take place in this world was underway at that very moment in a 117.6 square kilometer section of land occupied by force, where the Guantanamo naval base is located — which in itself is a gross violation of the sovereign rights of a small country and of international law.

We were never consulted beforehand. We were simply informed of the decision taken by the US government to transfer the prisoners to that base.

On January 11, 2002 the Cuban government published a statement in which it clearly set forth our country's position.

The world knows that the horrible crime committed against the Twin Towers in New York was unanimously condemned by all conscientious people on the planet.

Nevertheless, the government of the most powerful nation on earth, showing contempt

for all norms concerning what the world understands as the elementary principles of human rights, created this horrible prison where hundreds of citizens from many countries, including some from the United States' own allies, are kept locked up; without having been tried, incommunicado, without having been identified, with no legal defense, no guarantees for their physical integrity, with no criminal, no procedural law and for an indefinite length of time. They could have used their own territory for such a bizarre contribution to civilization, but they did it on a stretch of land that they occupy illegally and forcibly in another country, Cuba, whom they accuse of human rights violations every year in Geneva.

In spite of that, admirable things do take place in the Commission on Human Rights.

In current world conditions, there is a generalized fear of the fierce empire, of its threats, pressure and reprisals of all kinds, especially those against the most vulnerable countries of the Third World. It is almost suicidal to vote in Geneva against a resolution drafted and imposed by the United States, especially if it is against Cuba, the country which for almost 50 years has defied its arrogance and imperiousness. Even the strongest and most independent states find themselves obliged to take into consideration the political and economic consequences of their decisions.

Still, as could be seen just a few days ago in Geneva, Cuba and 20 other countries — some acting out of principle and others showing amazing courage — opposed the resolution and 10 abstained, thus maintaining their dignity and self-respect. Only 22 of the 53 members of the Commission, including the United States, joined in this infamy.

There were seven from Latin America, four of which suffer from extreme economic and social poverty, are highly dependent and have governments obliged to be totally servile. Nobody would consider them independent states. Up to now they have been pure fiction.

Peru, the fifth Latin American government to vote with the United States against Cuba, provides an example of the degree of servility and dependence into which imperialism and its neo-liberal globalization have led many countries in Latin America, whom they ruin politically in the twinkling of an eye when they force them to do things which are like the kiss of death for them.

The Peruvian head of state has seen his popularity drop to only 8 per cent in just a few months. I think that the people who support him could fit in just a small part of this crowded square. It is absolutely impossible to tackle the colossal economic and social problems affecting that country with such insignificant support. In fact, he does not govern, nor can he govern anything; the transnationals and the oligarchies take care of that, until society explodes, as has already begun to happen in more than one country.

At this point in my speech, remembering our Venezuelan brother, I feel like crying out: Long live Venezuela! (Applause and shouts of "Long may she live"!) Long live the Bolivarian revolutionary process! (Applause and shouts of "Long may it live"!) Long live Chavez, the brave, brilliant leader of Bolivar's people! (Applause and shouts of "Long

may he live"!)

Then we have the Chilean and Mexican governments.

I am not going to judge the former. I prefer that the way the president of Chile behaved in Geneva be judged by Salvador Allende, (Applause) who went down fighting, a gun in his hand, and who now has a place of honor and glory in the history of this continent, by the millions of Chileans vanished, tortured and murdered by design of those who drafted and proposed this resolution to censure Cuba — where not a single act of that sort, nor anything similar had ever happened — and by those who in their name are the standard bearers of the noble ideals and aspirations to create a truly humane society.

THE WORST AND MOST HUMILIATING PART FOR MEXICO WAS THAT THE NEWS ABOUT ITS VOTE IN GENEVA WAS ANNOUNCED IN WASHINGTON

In Mexico, a beloved sister country for all Cubans, the National Congress asked their president to abstain from voting for the resolution, although President Bush had demanded that he do so. It is truly painful to see the great prestige and influence Mexico earned in the eyes of Latin America and the world with its unimpeachable international policy, which stemmed from a genuine, far-reaching revolution, turn to ashes.

Latin America's solidarity with and support for Mexico and Mexico's for Latin America are crucial. More than half of Mexico's territory was snatched from it by its northern neighbor and great danger threatens what is left. The US-Mexican border is to all intents and purposes no longer the Rio Bravo of which Marti spoke. The United States has gone much deeper into Mexico. That border is today the line of death, where about 500 Mexican die every year. And all because of a brutal, ruthless principle: free passage for capital and goods; persecution, exclusion and death for human beings. And yet, millions of Mexicans take that risk. Today, the country obtains more income from their remittances than from oil exports, in spite of the high price of the latter.

Will such an inequitable and unfair situation really be solved by voting for anti-Cuban resolutions in Geneva, by accusing her of violating human rights?

The worst and most humiliating part for Mexico was that the news about its vote in Geneva, both on April 15 and 22, was announced in Washington.

The European Union, as usual, voted as a bloc, like a Mafia mob allied with and subordinate to Washington.

These sempiternal (*perpetual*) dirty, immoral displays against the Cuban Revolution never had any success until the socialist bloc disappeared. A plague of renegades, anxious for the credits and goods of consumer society added their votes to those of the European Community mafia. Thus they completed those petty deliveries in the Commission on Human Rights: resolutions pulled out with forceps, in the hard-fought battle which Cuba has never ceased to wage against the loathsome comedy which the empire, its allies,

followers and vassals push through in order to gain an advantage of one or two votes over the opposition and abstentions of 60 per cent of the Commission's members. Once they lowered their guard and lost the vote. Since then, their efforts have tripled and the pressures and threats against countries which are totally dependent on the credits, the money and resources handed out by international bodies, all controlled by the United States, have been stepped up one hundred fold.

One day a statue will have to be raised to those countries which, under such difficult circumstances, risked all and voted against Yankee resolutions (Applause) This story of this battle should go down in history. As you can see, this year 60% of the Commission's 53 members supported us. The empire calls these Pyrrhic victories successes and censures Cuba, in spite of the fact that the effort and political costs increase every year.

I can say here, just between ourselves, that an exhaustive examination of what occurs in the world, in every human society — excluding none, certainly not the European society, or the purest and most sacrosanct societies from some areas in Europe — would show that not one has a clean record when it comes to consideration and respect for human beings, such as the glorious Cuban Revolution. (Applause)

The very system that diminishes one part of society to less than nothing while others live in great opulence, from an ethical point of view, is not worthy of being called a humane society.

These campaigns, run by the dominant superpower and backed up by the allies who join with the empire in exploiting the world, are nothing but a sham and a lie, a brazen political display resulting from the need to justify the enormous inequalities which shall remain insurmountable until the economic system imposed on the world has disappeared. We do know about true human rights.

I cannot understand how an opulent society like our neighbor's dares to speak of human rights, while 44 million people there have no right to medical care, where millions of citizens live in ghettos and countless beggars live under bridges; a society where there are millions of illiterates and semi-illiterates, where there are millions and millions of unemployed and where prisons are filled with the children of the poorest and most deprived segments of the population.

On the other hand, no one can explain the brutal bombings against just any country, or how the empire's boss can speak of human rights while proclaiming it his right to "launch pre-emptive attacks on 60 or more countries", oblivious of the innocent persons who will die.

Their hatred for Cuba stems from the unexpected resistance a small country has put up against this power and its allied powers, which have plundered the planet. Cuba's presence is a pointing finger and proof that nations can fight, stand firm and win. Cuba's very presence is a humiliation for those who have imposed the most repugnant system of exploitation that has ever existed on Earth.

There are many ways to explain it. Here our Venezuelan brother reminded us of something we do not usually talk about, of our people's medical co-operation with other countries. None of this would have been possible without a revolution. As is well-known, when the Revolution triumphed 30% of our population was illiterate and 90% were illiterate and semi-illiterate combined, because in this world anyone who does not have at least a sixth grade education — and today we should talk of at least a ninth-grade education — can be considered a semi-illiterate.

They want to hide the fact that Cuba is first worldwide in educational matters, that its children are in first place in tests of knowledge, even above developed countries, (Applause) that the minimum education level, except in rare exceptions, is ninth grade and there is no other country in the world that has reached these minimum levels for most of the population.

They know that despite their criminal blockade and the obstacles they have placed in the way of our obtaining medicines and medical equipment and technology, infant mortality is lower in our country than in the United States (Applause). Perhaps they are unaware that we are going to reduce this infant mortality rate to even less than 6 and perhaps in the not too distant future, to less than 5. We are convinced — and this is something I have never spoken about — that in a period of no more than five or six years, life expectancy in our country will not be lower than 80 years (Applause) and that our country will become the most advanced center for healthcare services in the world.

If an analysis were made of the millions of children who die in Third World countries every year and who could be saved — in many countries the figures are as high as 150 deaths for every 1000 live births — and those who die among the populations of the majority of those same countries that voted against Cuba in Geneva, they would realize that a genocide is committed every year on this earth; that millions more people on this planet — children and adults who could be saved — die every year than died in the First World War and almost as many as died in the Second, people who could have been saved but do not survive because of a shortage of medical resources.

The arsenal of arguments that we have at our disposal to show that this system is the most atrociously cruel system that has ever existed is enormous. One has only to use simple mathematical calculations to prove the genocide that the United States and its European allies commit against the world every year.

They know that this is true, they do not dare to argue against it; they created underdevelopment and they have perpetuated backwardness through colonialization, looting of natural resources and even by enslaving millions and millions of human beings, thus giving rise to this world of extreme poverty with serious problems still to be solved. I won't try to list them here, but they are almost insoluble problems which when combined with others, place in jeopardy the very existence of our species.

Taking into account that events such as this rally should not be too long and mindful of

the effort you have made to come and stay here for many hours, I shall limit myself to mentioning just a few facts. I shall put it like this: the capitalist system, which in its time played a somewhat progressive role against feudalism and which later became the imperialist system with the ways used today to plunder nations, wasting and destroying the planet's natural resources, is the system most inconceivable and irreconcilable with an honest, sincere and objective notion of human rights.

There, in Geneva, the gangs of the owners of the world economy meet and it would be worthwhile asking them how many Third World countries they have collaborated with, what they did against apartheid in South Africa, how many teachers they have sent to the Third world and how many doctors. I have already said that I do not like to bring up these issues, but I do so today because on this May Day we are in fact speaking about what happened in Geneva a while ago.

One should ask each one of those gentlemen how many doctors they have working in Third World countries. There are some organizations like "Medecins sans frontiers" and some foundations that give some aid. But I say this to those gentlemen: I am sure that the United States and Europe together, do not have as many doctors in Haiti as Cuba does, providing medical care to more than 7 million people under extremely difficult conditions (Applause)

They could be asked, one by one, because those societies that were not designed for justice and solidarity but educated in selfishness are incapable of making any sacrifice whatsoever for other human beings.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF CUBAN DOCTORS, DENTISTS AND HEALTHCARE TECHNICIANS WHO LEND THEIR SERVICES TO OTHER PEOPLES IS NO LESS THAN 17,000

I have mentioned one country, Haiti, in which they constantly intervene and invade, but where they never send a single doctor. I do not know how they would react if I said to them today that right now Cuba is developing a number of healthcare programs in Africa and in Latin America, and that a total of at least 17,000 Cuban doctors, dentists and healthcare technicians are serving in other countries (Applause) and that every year they save thousands of lives and give many tens of millions of human beings their health back or guarantee their health. And let no one think that we are left without doctors, because this effort is paralleled by a veritable revolution in the healthcare services in our country.

A while ago I was discussing with Saez the major repairs of polyclinics and the new services they will provide, and they are working so that before the end of the year they will have completed repairs on Havana's 82 outpatient clinics, and some that are newly built, and they will offer services they were never before provided. (Applause) And this is but one detail because many other programs are underway too, and not only in Havana but also throughout the country.

We have estimated the many millions or tens of millions of journeys that we will save

our people who, with all the public transportation difficulties, have to go and visit their relatives in hospitals; meanwhile, many services which were previously only available in hospitals will, many of them, soon be available in polyclinics.

There is no doubt, and I mean no doubt, that our country will have the best healthcare services in the world. And if a few years ago we talked about tens of thousands of general medicine specialists, the day is not far off when we shall talk of tens of thousands of PhDs in Medical Sciences. To that end, and in addition to that, we are implementing programs in education, culture, sports and other areas which will be supported by a much more sound economic base than that with which our country's development began when it was devoted to producing sugar cane and other similar commodities, as this was all that an illiterate and starving population could do to survive.

The bandits who accuse us of violating human rights would not dare to say that Cuba is the only country in the world — see how great our people's feats are — in which there has not been a single disappeared person, not a single person tortured in all the 45 years of the Revolution. (Applause)

We have made a Revolution that is as clean as that war we waged in the Sierra Maestra, when not one prisoner was ever shot or beaten to obtain information. This is almost the only country in Latin America where death squads have never existed, nor extrajudicial executions, and 45 years have gone by. If those viper tongues of the empire and their followers could find one case, just one, we would be willing to give them our Republic of Cuba as a present, if they found just one case. (Applause)

These are realities; I am not exaggerating, far from it. We know what we have done throughout these 45 years and the unwavering straight line we have pursued in maintaining complete loyalty to our principles that allowed us to win the war and carry out a revolution that we have defended for 45 years. And what is our people today, what is its consciousness, its culture, its ideas, what degree of unity has it achieved? There is no other people with a higher cultural level, a higher level of political conscience than our people. And I would just add one more thing: we are only beginning. (Applause)

I saw it this morning on television; while I was waiting for sunrise, and it was obvious. They interviewed many people and you should have heard what they said. I could see a new world, students everywhere and from everywhere: university students, students from the University of Information Technology, students from the school for art instructors, (shouts from the crowd) students from the school for social workers, students from the schools with accelerated training courses for teachers and nurses; schools that we share with thousands of — I am not going to say foreign — young people, young brothers and sisters from Latin America and from other parts of the world. (Applause)

One can't help but feel proud that not only our doctors go there by the thousands but that we have also invited thousands and thousands of youth from Latin America and from other parts of the world to study medicine in Cuba.

We are, in fact, developing more and more efficient ways of transmitting knowledge, and who knows how long it will take the rest of the world to catch up with this efficiency and these methods and, even more importantly, to put them into practice.

I harbor not the slightest doubt, however, that Venezuela, which is implementing and will be implementing highly improved educational programs will, in a short period of time, lead that heroic and valiant people, the cradle of the Latin American independence struggle, to levels similar to those that Cuba has today.

I was saying that the political cost of their little game in Geneva is increasingly high but this year their actions backfired on them – they shot themselves in the foot, as the saying goes – almost killing them(*selves*).

* * * *

When this year Cuba suggested sending a Commission representative to see what was going on in the Guantanamo naval base, panic spread through the herd of hypocrites, especially those from the European Community. Morale collapsed. Some European governments were truly ashamed, they had to confess their failure to act according to their principles and their hypocrisy, or to do the impossible: disobey the empire. This was too much for such venerable defenders of human rights, whose darts are only aimed at those whom for centuries were their colonies, where they wiped out tens of millions of natives and to which they brought countless human beings from Africa whom they made into slaves with less freedom than work horses.

And that is how they treat millions of people in the Third World, victims of the plunder, unequal terms of trade and the looting of their natural resources and all the hard currency reserves in their central banks, which are deposited in US or European banks, for the most part, and which are used to finance Investments, trade and fiscal deficits and the military adventures of the empire and its allies.

As a result of the Cuban proposal in Geneva, Bush himself and his senior officials had to work frantically, personally calling presidents and heads of state. No one knew where he found the time, especially if one takes into account that he likes to sleep a lot — or so they say— (Laughter), nor how he could attend to Iraq, the financial problems of the government, fundraising banquets and matters related to the election campaign. Perhaps it is not fair to call him “Fûrher” (*fascist Hitler’s title –ed.*); perhaps he is a genius.

Why can Bush talk of a fiscal deficit of \$512 billion and a similar trade deficit, a total of a trillion dollars in just one year? Because he manipulates and spends the hard currency of the immense majority of the world population in order to defend those and other privileges.

All the reserves of Third World central banks are kept in banks overseas, mostly in the United States. And all the money of anyone who has any money — earned and unearned

money— is changed into dollars and deposited in US banks or in the banks of some developed country because of the fear of constant devaluations of their countries' weak currencies. As per a provision of the International Monetary Fund, no central bank in these Third World countries can prevent people from changing their money into dollars or any other convertible currency.

The owners of this money want safety for what they have saved...or robbed. They take any money they have out of the country, not to buy anything, not even to waste it, they simply take it out definitely. That money deposited in European or U.S. banks is lent to businesspeople or to anyone who needs it, and those who need it most include governments. The money to cover a budget deficit of more than \$500 billion comes from those banks.

Thus the economic system imposed on Third World nations forces them to transfer their money to the more developed countries, which is not the same but equally loathsome as the fact that these developed countries charge more and more for their goods and pay less and less for commodities. And to top it all off, there is a debt that in Latin America stands at more than \$750 billion, which combined with that of the rest of the Third World countries climbs to \$2.5 trillion.

This is already leading the world to the brink of catastrophe, to a dead end, to insoluble problems. Thus, humanity will have to struggle for more than economic justice, or for a fair distribution of wealth; it will have to struggle for the survival of our species. I say this on this May Day, at a time when this gathering should be over. (Laughter)

This year, the United States has a budgetary deficit of \$512 billion and also a trade deficit of more than \$500 billion and the rest of the world is paying this with money that left and is never coming back. They use this money to arm themselves to the teeth with the most sophisticated war machinery and they wage wars of conquest in search of raw materials.

The order established in the world, especially that set up by the Bretton Woods agreements at the end of the Second World War — you probably have heard of that name — gave the United States enormous privileges, because at that time they had 80% of the world's gold. That country was not destroyed by the war; it exported a great deal, a very, very great deal — Europe was destroyed, and so was Asia — and accumulated \$30 billion in gold. This is how they were given the right to issue the hard currency needed for world trade, although each dollar they printed was supposed to be backed by a given amount of gold.

Since 1971, when they spent enormous sums of money on the Vietnam War and their gold reserves dropped by one third, famous Mr. Nixon suspended the gold conversion of those currencies and since then it is just paper that is in circulation.

It would take time to explain this better and in more depth but we have roundtables, we have two new television channels. Our technicians, our teachers and professors can

explain to our people these subjects, which are really interesting and help to understand what the world is really all about.

The international situation is complex. The adventurist policies —adventurist!— of this administration have given the world increasingly insoluble problems. The economic order imposed is ever more unsustainable. That is why nobody finds it strange that uncontrollable social movements break out, and that revolutions break out, anywhere, anytime. This is already happening.

In Europe, an impressive, encouraging event took place in Spain. (...) *(this section on an event limited to Spain omitted as being of subsequent marginal interest – original on file – Web Ed.)*

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And if you will allow me to continue, I don't have much left to say but it depends on you. (Applause)

SPAIN HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY AND THE MORAL DUTY TO FIGHT TO DEFINITELY RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRIES THE YOUNG LATIN AMERICANS SENT TO IRAQ

The present government has kept its promise to pull Spanish troops out of Iraq. This is undoubtedly a commendable act. But the Spanish state, under the previous administration, had taken upon itself to recruit a considerable number of young Dominicans, Hondurans, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans to be sent as cannon-fodder to Iraq with the Spanish Legion, something unheard of in the history of this hemisphere. Spain, which as the former colonial power in Latin America aspires to be given respect and consideration and even to play a role in Latin America and the Caribbean, has a responsibility and a moral duty to return to their homes those young Latin Americans who were sent to Iraq because of the actions of the previous government.

There is a new government but the state must take responsibility for what the previous government did. It is Spain's responsibility that they are in that war and it is its moral duty to promote and support the withdrawal of these young people who are in Iraq.

You already know that colonial powers are what they are, and they always tend to believe that their former subjects are like newborn great grandchildren who need the help of their colonial master. Sometimes they speak of aid, like in Europe when they said that they were giving us humanitarian aid, and one fine day they had the idea of taking reprisals.

Those people had forgotten the monstrous prison in Guantanamo; they did not remember that monstrous injustice, the cruel, pitiless way in which the United States keeps Cuba's five heroes in jail (*"The Cuban Five" found innocent in a Florida court but only freed after a decade of international campaigns –ed.*), five men who were

defending their country against terrorism by seeking out information; the terrorism that U.S. governments have invented and used against Cuba for 45 years. (Shouts)

There is no need to repeat the story of thousands of our fellow Cubans who have lost their lives; no need to speak now of what happened in Barbados. The fact is that the European Community remembered nothing, did not remember that over there in Miami they have always freely and with complete impunity hatched plans for assassination attempts and terrorism against Cuba, supported by the mafia, a mafia close to the U.S. government. Mr. Bosch enjoys his freedom in Miami, together with Posada Carriles, who organized the mid-air explosion on a Cubana aircraft. No, they do not remember that nor can they remember it.

For 45 years imperialism has planned and is still planning conspiracies, attempts to destabilize our country; it pays mercenaries and is now going about saying that much more money must be invested in this. Let them not cry out or complain if Cuba then takes the appropriate measures to punish mercenaries who work for a foreign power. (Applause)

If Cuba defends itself, if it arrests and punishes mercenaries so that no one should think he or she is immune to punishment, then they launch massive campaigns against our country. They want to prevent her from defending herself, and this country, without violating the standards it has always observed in its struggles, will defend itself with the law, and it will defend itself with weapons whenever this is necessary, to the last drop of blood! (Applause and shouts)

So they should not entertain any illusions and come weeping and wailing, and portraying us as human rights violators.

They are doing the same thing to Venezuela as they do to Cuba: they concoct acts of provocation, create incidents, kill people and then blame the Venezuelan government. There is a really interesting case; that is, how Venezuelans resist, even when that Venezuelan people has yet to attain the level of knowledge that our people has on a large scale. It must be seen that that is the people's instinct and they stand firm, and it is difficult to deceive them.

In Cuba everybody is very much aware of the truth, but the empire carries out these campaigns to damage Cuba's reputation abroad. We do not lose any sleep over it. It does not matter what they think today, what matters is what they will think tomorrow. This Revolution will leave its indelible mark on the history of the world (Applause), and it has absolutely nothing to be ashamed of, because its morals are as high as the stars and its behavior has been unimpeachable, apart from individual errors of a different sort that occur and which have nothing to do with human rights. It would be naive to think that no economic, political, administrative or legal mistakes are made; however, no one makes mistakes, no one practices deception about the fundamental things which concern the most sacred of the Revolution's principles, things concerning human beings, nor are mistakes or deception about such matters permitted.

What we are doing today – I say this on this May Day – is really like a huge new revolution (Applause), based on the experience of so many years of struggle. It is something that goes beyond what we have done so far for the welfare of each and every one of our Cuban compatriots, with no social exclusion, and follows this same extraordinarily humane line.

We all know what has been done and you are proof of it, but we know how many more things could have been done that we did not do because we lacked the necessary knowledge, we lacked the necessary experience. There are no books about how to make a revolution or what a revolution is about; nor was there any book about how, for 45 years, this little country would have to stand up to the most powerful country that has ever existed in the world, nor about the fact that it could not defeat us with its weapons. It knew the price.

The Bay of Pigs, where they underestimated our people, did not even last 70 hours, and during the Missile Crisis the world was on the brink of blowing itself up as a result of the imperialist plans of aggression and the steadfastness of our people. And we have withstood all these years of the blockade and the special period. This is a seasoned, battle-hardened people with great power in its educated, cultured, revolutionary young people, whom nobody will ever be able to defeat. (Applause and shouts)

So, we know that what we are doing will once again transform this country – it is already changing it in a most impressive way.

I spoke of the former colonial powers that think they can give us political and social lessons. If the colonial powers so wish, we can teach them a few things, but let no one feel impatient in the belief that they can teach us.

We have already said to hell with to the European Economic Community's famous humanitarian aid and we warn them that we are in no hurry for them to send any more handouts.

Observe closely: if we buy \$1.5 billion worth of goods from them annually and if we only sell them \$500 million worth of goods, much of it in the form of raw material, it is we who are giving them humanitarian aid, because from the \$1.5 billion that they sell us, they must make around \$500 million net profit. Then they turn up with their fancy suitcases offering a little bit of aid and they spend more in the five star hotels they stay in and on the planes in which they travel than what they contribute. So the European Community should not bother coming to us with that nonsense.

Nor should anyone think that they can come and give us their two cents' worth of advice about how we should develop our democracy because this country has more than enough experience, it has struggled a great deal and has been sufficiently successful at the cost of sacrifice and blood for any European country to come to offer us little lessons in democracy because no country in Europe, afloat in their colossal inequalities, enjoys, and

some less than others, the true, egalitarian and fully participative democracy that Cuba enjoys today in every sense, and has since the day the people took power and wealth was distributed fairly. And not only did the people take power but it is the people that defend that power, without NATO or military pacts with the Devil. (Applause and shouts)

It would be a question of discussing each one of the things that are done in this country and each one of the things that are done in the world's rich countries to see if they have the level of equality, humanity, of caring for all, that we have with no exceptions, something that has never existed anywhere else.

We are quite aware of what we are, of what we have done and of what we have. But it seems that some foolish people still have not noticed this and persist in meddling in our internal affairs, pretending to teach us how to set up a democracy. In any case, we can respond to such a generous gesture by teaching them how to create equality, how to eradicate privilege and how to establish a revolutionary democracy.

I am talking about these things like this, on the fly, because I did not have much time to write.

You will remember that I spoke of what was going on with young Latin Americans sent to Iraq and of the need for them to be returned to their countries, because now imperialism is looking for cannon-fodder and it might happen that one day even the Poles, who are over there as mercenaries, might decide to withdraw too. They would have to be more consistent with the history of a country that was invaded many times, occupied many times, divided up many times and should not now go hiring out its young people as mercenaries in a war of conquest.

I have no doubt that before too long those who today are acting ridiculously and shamefully by sending their troops over there to support this repugnant war will begin to think seriously about it in a very different way.

And since I have said all this, I think it is my duty to say what our position is with regards to the U.S. people.

WE DO NOT SUPPORT ANY GOVERNMENT IN IRAQ, NOR ANY GIVEN POLITICAL SYSTEM; THAT IS THE EXCLUSIVE PREROGATIVE OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE

The peoples of the world, including the Cuban people, do not hate the American people nor do they want young American soldiers to die — many of whom are black, mestizo or Latin American — who were induced by poverty and unemployment to join the armed forces and today are the victims of an unnecessary, stupid war.

We do not support any government in Iraq or any given political system; this is the exclusive prerogative of the Iraqis. We felt solidarity with those who died in the attacks in

New York and Madrid and we condemn such methods. The enormous and growing world sympathy with the Iraqi people was generated by the brutal bombings of Baghdad and other cities that sowed terror and death among innocent civilians, totally ignoring the terrible trauma which will affect millions of children, adolescents, pregnant women, mothers and old people for all of their lives, bombings for which there is no possible justification, based as they were on brazen lies. This sympathy is growing, because billions of people have come to realize that it is a war of conquest to gain possession of the country's resources and raw materials, because there was no justification, nor legality whatsoever, because international laws were broken, because the United Nations' prerogatives and authority were ignored.

The people of Iraq are today struggling for their independence, their lives, the lives of their children and for their legitimate rights and resources.

The US government is facing a complicated situation because of this, as it insisted on taking the path of violence, war and terror. I have the moral authority to hold this point of view because long before this warmongering policy was unleashed, on September 11, 2001, the very same day as the horrendous attack on the Twin Towers, in a ceremony to inaugurate the school year for 4,500 young primary school teachers I said, and I quote:

"It is very important to know what the reaction of the US Government will be. Possibly the days to come will be dangerous for the world, and I do not mean Cuba. Cuba is the most peaceful country in the world for several reasons: our policy, our kind of struggle, our doctrine, and also, comrades, for the absolute absence of fear".
[...]

"The days to come will be tense both inside and outside the United States. Who knows how many people will start voicing their views.

"Whenever there is a tragedy like this, even when they are sometimes so difficult to prevent, I see no other way but to keep calm. And if at some point I am allowed to make a suggestion to an adversary who has been tough on us for many years now [...] if under specific circumstances it were correct to suggest something to the adversary, for the wellbeing of the American people and based on the arguments I have presented, we would advise the leaders of the powerful empire to keep their equanimity, to act calmly, not to be carried away by a fit of rage or hatred and not to start hunting people down dropping bombs all over the place.

"I reiterate that none of the world's problems, not even terrorism, can be solved by the use of force, and every act of force, every reckless use of force anywhere would seriously aggravate the world's problems.

"The way forward is neither the use of force nor war. I say this here with the full credibility of someone who has always been honest, with the sound conviction and the experience of someone who has been through the years of struggle that we have lived through in Cuba. It is only guided by reason and applying an intelligent policy based on

the strength of consensus and the support of international public opinion that such a predicament could be definitively solved. I think this unexpected episode must be used to undertake an international struggle against terrorism. However, this international struggle against terrorism cannot succeed by killing a terrorist here and another one there, that is, by using similar methods to theirs, sacrificing innocent lives. It is resolved, inter alia, by putting an end to State terrorism and other repulsive crimes, by putting an end to genocide and by honestly pursuing a policy of peace and respect for moral and legal standards that are inescapable. The world cannot be saved unless a path of international peace and cooperation is pursued."

The Iraq war brings to many people memories of the Vietnam War. For me, it brings back memories of the Algerian war of liberation, when French military might shattered against the resistance of a people with a very different culture, language and religion, in a country which in places is just as desert-like as many parts of Iraq, a people that managed to defeat the French troops and all their technology, which was fairly advanced for its time. The French had previously sustained defeat in Dien Bien Phu (*North Vietnam, 1950s –ed.*) where Bush's predecessors were on the brink of using nuclear weapons. In this type of war the entire arsenal of a hegemonic superpower is superfluous. This superpower can conquer a country with its enormous power but it is impossible to administer and govern that country if its population struggles resolutely against the occupiers.

I never thought that one day Mr. Bush would humbly write a polite letter to the president of Syria and would ask the Iranian government — both countries considered terrorist until now — for help in resolving the conflict in Iraq. It is even more amazing that, according to press dispatches, the US Marines were withdrawn from Fallujah two days ago and replaced by Iraqi soldiers led by a former general in Saddam Hussein's army.

I do not criticize any peace effort or initiative which the current US administration decides to take, but I doubt very much that there can be any solution other than withdrawing US troops from Iraq — where they never should have been sent — and returning full independence to the Iraqi people. This would have the support of the international community, which would no doubt find a way to resolve the complex situation that has been created there.

Meanwhile, we Cubans will continue to observe what happens and will continue to wage our most resolute battle against those who dare to advocate political changes based on the physical removal of some of us. The worst is that those who speak of speeding up such changes are characters whose same old murderous ideas are quite familiar to us.

Now they are once again making themselves hoarse shouting threats of upcoming measures to affect our economy and destabilize the country. They would do well to return to us our five prisoners of the empire, who with unbeatable dignity are withstanding the most shameful and cruel case of human rights violations. Their fate in federal government prisons, where they are kept completely separate, is hardly any better than that of those held captive in the Guantanamo naval base. But despite all that, we do not

hesitate in suggesting to those who govern the United States that they be calmer, more sensible, saner and more intelligent.

To those who persist in their efforts to destroy the Revolution, I simply say in the name of the crowd gathered here on this May 1st, as I said at (Playa) Giron (*the 1961 Bay of Pigs American CIA-led mercenary invasion on a remote south beach of Cuba –Ed.*) and at other decisive moments in our battles:

!Viva el socialismo!

!Patria o Muerte!

!Venceremos!

(Ovation)